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Abstract:	Exploro resistencia al colonialismo de energía en las obras de los poetas saharauis Limam Boisha y Fatma Galia Mohammed Salem. Primero, sigo los cables de la infraestructura de energía en Sahara Occidental ocupado para entender cómo sol y viento se vuelven implicados, materialmente y discursivamente, en procesos de colonialismo. Después, razono que Boisha y Mohammed Salem usan estéticas eólicas para resistir los discursos colonizadores de constructores de energía renovable. Estéticas eólicas están formadas por el viento en términos de estructura, motivos, imaginario y recursos retóricos. Hacen una llamada categórica a todos los sentidos a través de los cuales conocemos el viento: sonido y tacto, y visiones de lo que es soplado por lo mismo. Las estéticas eólicas que moldean los textos saharauis exploradas en este articulo desafían entendimientos hegemónicos de (energía de) viento y de los corazones desérticos del Sahara Occidental, así resistiendo a discursos de corporaciones que promulgan colonialismo.

Decolonising Renewable Energy: Aeolian Aesthetics in the poetry of Fatma Galia Mohammed Salem and Limam Boisha

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Scholars have begun to question the commonly-held notion that renewable energy is always environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. In particular, energy humanities researchers are tentatively beginning to highlight connections between renewable energy developments and colonisation of indigenous lands.[1] But it is not just energy infrastructure, or material regimes of generating energy, that act as colonial apparatus. Hegemonic understandings of energy, that which is 'harnessed' or 'produced' by human technology and measured in units, are largely fruit of fossil-fuelled industrial capitalism and colonialism (Lohmann 2015-2016, Mitchell 2013). To transition away from a colonial energy system is therefore to rethink how we understand energy. Imre Szeman and his co-investigators have called for a project of 'indigenizing energy,' which would seek to understand the philosophies of indigenous energy cultures and their implications for a global energy transition (2016: 3). I follow that call by focusing on conceptions of wind, wind energy and, relatedly, of desert ecologies, that emerge from Saharawi poetry. I focus on two poets – Limam Boisha and Fatma Galia Mohammed Salem – who are members of the Friendship Generation[2] of Saharawi writers that use Spanish as their

[1] See especially Cymene Howe and Dominic Boyer, "Aeolian Politics," Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory, 16:1, 2015.

[2] The Generation was constituted as such in 2005. Joanna Allan, 'The Saharawi "Friendship Generation," *The Literary Encyclopedia.* Volume 8.1.2, https://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=19491, 29 May 2017

language of choice, because of the prominence and accessibility of their work.[3] I argue that these writers employ what I call – borrowing the first term from Howe and Boyer's conceptualisation of *aeolian politics,* which highlights the manifold effects, negative as well as positive, of wind power (Howe and Boyer: 31) - a Saharawi aeolian aesthetic: a particular wind-infused form of artistic expression inspired by the traditional ways-of-life of Saharawi nomads, and their relationship with wind and windblown desertscapes. Aeolian aesthetics, I argue, allow Saharawi poets to claim their desert heartlands based on love and knowledge, to challenge dominant Western imaginaries of desert, and to provide a counter to hegemonic understandings of energy and their colonial implications. Indeed, the artistic texts explored in the paper undermine the logic of wind energy developers' colonial narratives. They do so by drawing on the properties of wind and Aeolian geology aesthetically, and by making apparent, explicitly for a foreign audience, how wind shapes and enables the Saharawi people's very way of life.

In terms of structure, I first explain my reasoning for setting this paper within the field of Petroculture. Second, I give some background on the Western Sahara conflict and renewable energy developments in occupied Western Sahara. This includes a brief analysis of the main wind energy developer's (German conglomerate SIEMENS)

[3] The work of both poets is regularly drawn on by solidarity activists and artists. For example, Mohammed Salem's work "La ciudad del viento" formed the basis of museum installations by Spanish artist Federico Guzman in Madrid and the Basque Country. All poems drawn on in this article are readily available online.

narrative depiction of wind and desert.[4] Then, I discuss why an aeolian aesthetic is possible in a petrocultural world. This allows me to move on to analyse works by poets Boisha and Mohammed Salem. Using their work, I explore what aeolian aesthetics are, and discuss their decolonising potential. I structure this analysis by focusing on poetic evocations of windblown desertscapes: the Hamada and *gallaba* in Boisha's work, then an erg in Mohammed Salem's poem. On the way, I argue that aeolian aesthetics are the brushes to Boisha and Mohammed Salem's poetic palettes: wind informs poetic form, structure and rhetorical strategies as well as content. I also explore the relationship between the wind and the poets' underlying anti-colonial politics.

Because wind energy developments in Western Sahara emerge from, and maintain, the capitalist, colonial, oil-dominated world order, in this paper I seek to engage with Petrocultural Studies. Petroculture is the global culture of the modern era born of a colonial, capitalist, fossil-fuelled energy system with all its political, social, economic and environmental implications. Scholars of petroculture have concerned themselves with how oil has shaped modern culture and society, largely by reading energy into literature and visual culture. There is an aspiration, amongst such scholars, to contribute to a successful energy transition: only by unraveling and understanding the logics of oil-fuelled culture and our attachments to them can we begin to reimagine and reinvent our anticipated lives after oil. Within Petroculture as a field, scholarship to date has understandably focused on oil. In this paper, I bring

[4] SIEMENS is the largest industrial manufacturing company in Europe with branch offices abroad. The principal divisions of the company are energy, industry, healthcare and infrastructure & cities.

renewable energy into the conversation. While Petroculture scholars have speculated that 'solar and wind literatures' may emerge in the future, post energy transition, I wish to show that wind literature, or at least the use of aeolian aesthetics, already exists in the here and now (Szeman 2017a: 278).[5] In turn then, a discussion of aeolian aesthetics can yield positive outcomes beyond the Saharawi case. If knowing how oil has shaped culture is essential for ensuring a true energy transition, then surely, too, is knowledge of the cultural impact of energy sources to which we wish to transition.

Western Sahara and energy colonialism

Western Sahara became a Spanish possession during the infamous 1884 Berlin Conference, in which the European powers colonised Africa with a ruler and pencil. For Spain, facing an existential crisis since the loss of its empire in Latin America, Africa emerged as a horizon of possibility for resuscitating its 'glorious' imperial past (San Martín 2005: 250). As well as attempting to extend its 'civilising mission' amongst the Saharawis, Spain exploited the Sahara's resources, above all its phosphates. In 1975, as Spanish dictator Francisco Franco lay unconscious and dying, his government passed its colony, by then rocked by a widely-supported indigenous independence movement known as the Polisario, to neighbouring Morocco and Mauritania via the illegal Madrid Accords. In exchange, Spain achieved continued

[5] The emerging sub-genre of solar punk may also be of interest. See Centre for Environmental Research in the Human Science (CENHS), Podcast 157 – Solarpunk (feat. Rhys Williams), http://culturesofenergy.com/157-solarpunk-feat-rhys-williams/

access to the country's fisheries and a 33 per cent share in Western Sahara's rich phosphates industry.

Several thousand Saharawis fled the invading armies. In the southwest corner of the Algerian desert, near the Algerian military outpost of Tindouf, they established the refugee camps that still house them today. In 1976 Polisario declared these camps the Saharawi state-in-exile (the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic), which, as Pablo San Martín powerfully shows, has functioned as a hub for the consolidation of Saharawi national identity (San Martín 2010). The refugee nation has its own schools, hospitals and parliament, and some 200,000 inhabitants. The refugee-citizens are separated from those Saharawis left behind by the world's longest active military wall, which severs Moroccan-occupied Sahara from Polisario-controlled 'liberated' Western Sahara. The UN considers Polisario the only official representative of the Saharawi people. In 1991 the UN brokered a ceasefire between the Polisario and Morocco (Polisario and Mauritania had made peace in 1979) on the back of a promise for a self-determination referendum on independence for the Saharawis. Morocco has continually blocked the referendum, whilst the UN has been unable or unwilling to force Morocco to submit to its peace process.[6] Officially, Western Sahara is considered a "non-self-governing territory" – UN parlance for 'colony.' No country in the world officially recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.

[6] For a detailed account of how this 'blocking' has worked in practice, see Human Rights Watch, "Keeping it Secret: The United Nations Operation in the Western Sahara," October 1995.

Saharawis see their prospects for independence blocked by resource wealth. Morocco sells Saharawi fisheries, sand, phosphates and agricultural produce to customers all over the world. Since 2002, Morocco's lack of oil, and the possibility of oil's presence in Western Sahara, has furthered Morocco's resolve to hold onto its colony (Allan 2016). But, from the perspective of many Saharawi activists and their allies, the most dangerous development is not oil but renewable energy (Hagen 2018). Since 2009, Morocco has overseen the rapid development of renewable energy infrastructure in occupied Western Sahara. It takes its colony as a source of electrical power, thereby strengthening its hold on Western Sahara by way of the irreversibility of physical infrastructure and energy dependence. The twisted metal strands of transmission lines connect one territory to the other, as if in one corporeal nervous system. The cables crisscrossing the Morocco/Western Sahara border mirror the former's discourse of 'territorial integrity,' which imagines Western Sahara as an integral part of the Moroccan nation. Beyond, the Moroccan grid links to the EU energy market by way of connections through Western Sahara's former colonial power, Spain. Renewable energy, in occupied Western Sahara, is a colonial agent.

By 2020, 26.4 per cent of Morocco's renewable energy is expected to come from its colony (Western Sahara Resource Watch 2015). Morocco's main corporate partner in this endeavour is SIEMENS. So far, SIEMENS has provided the mills for the 200 Megawatts (MW) Aftissat farm, whilst SIEMENS itself will be leading the respective 100MW and 300MW programmes in Boujdour and Tiskrad, all in occupied Western

Sahara. These add to the existing farms at Foum el Oued (50MW), which powers a nearby phosphate mine (Western Sahara Resource Watch 2016), and the 5MW CIMAR plant, designed to power a Moroccan cement-grinding factory, also in occupied Western Sahara (Western Sahara Resource Watch 2017, Environmental Justice Atlas 2017). SIEMENS builds these wind farms against the express wishes of the Polisario and Saharawi civil society. In an attempt to give a positive spin to its questionable role in these developments, SIEMENS relies on colonial discourse. It is not the purpose of this paper to analyse this discourse in depth, as I do so elsewhere.[7] However, below I give one example of SIEMENS' discursive colonisation of Western Sahara's land and wind in order to show readers the colonising narratives that Saharawi poets undermine. It is worth highlighting here that Boisha and Mohammed Salem do not compose/write in direct response to SIEMENS.[8] But their poetry, with or without explicit intention, challenges the colonial discourses of SIEMENS and other corporate and state actors that use similar colonising narratives.

A short SIEMENS film promoting the company's role in the *Moroccan Renewable Energy Programme* (developments in Western Sahara form part of this Programme)

[7] I am working on a paper discussing SIEMENS' embroilment with settler colonialism. See also Alicia Fernandez Camporro, "The King's Speech. An Analysis of the Institutional Discourse around the Development of Renewable Energy Infrastructure in Western Sahara," (Forthcoming).

[8] Both poets considered here are, though, aware of SIEMENS' activities in Western Sahara and strongly condemn the company. Personal interview with Limam Boisha, Madrid, 6 July 2018. Telephone interview with Fatma Galia Mohammed Salem, 18 September 2018.

showcases the colonial narratives on which Siemens routinely relies. The video is embedded in an online article dedicated to a particular wind farm, "Africa's largest onshore wind farm".[9] The article highlights the farm's contribution to carbon offsets and the hi-tech prowess of SIEMENS: "wind turbines have been specifically adapted to withstand the corrosive conditions of both the salty ocean winds, desert sandstorms and the year round hot weather," reads the article. Here, SIEMENS builds on pre-existing discourses, hegemonic in Western public imagination, of the desert as scorching, inhospitable and hostile. This serves to underline the company's technological acumen in overcoming this 'extreme' context (Hunold 2011). The article ends with the lines: 'Capturing the power of desert winds – and turning it into clean energy millions rely on. That's Ingenuity for life.' The wind is imagined as a wild beast (barbaric native) that SIEMENS can harness for capitalism. Indeed, the company's self-perceived brilliance in managing such a feat is announced with the towering capital of "Ingenuity."

This idea of 'nature' (specifically wind) as domitable is repeated in the corporate video. The film opens with a low-angle shot of a sandy dune, dust blowing over it, and a blindingly bright sun on the horizon, which is made still more intense by the contrast with the otherwise dark lighting. We hear a howling wind, emphasising the desolation suggested by the visuals. SIEMENS draws here on the nineteenth century European colonial doctrine of *terra nullius*, in which 'non-civilised' peoples were seen as incapable of ruling, or making effective use of, the 'wild' and 'hostile' lands

[9] Available at https://www.siemens.com/ma/en/home/company/topic-areas/ingenuity-for-life/tarfaya-wind-farm.html

that they inhabited (Gilbert 2014, 95, Huh 2015, 715). This desolate scene set, the moment of colonial encounter arrives. The heroic missionary bravely confronts hostility: the mood changes as text appears on screen, signalling SIEMENS entrance in this damned desert. 'SIEMENS presents… Drawing the wind.' Simultaneously the light brightens, the howling sound is replaced with uplifting music, and the camera cuts to a pan of beige desert and rock, finally resting on a row of mills, blades circling. Next, another low angle shot, this time taken from the bottom of a mill, gives the latter a gigantesque, majestic look. Adopting the hoary colonial discourses of white-man-as-saviour, SIEMENS literally and metaphorically brings the light. Meanwhile, a voiceover claims 'to draw the wind, you must tame it…' The wind is imagined as a natural asset that can only be harnessed (dominated and domesticated) by SIEMENS. Here SIEMENS makes use of, and reinforces, the violent Cartesian nature/society dualism, which, as a system of thought, was central in structuring the colonial world order and what Jason W. Moore terms the modern 'world ecology' or 'capitalist web-of-life' (Moore 2016). SIEMENS is enmeshed in said 'world ecology' of power, capital and nature, in which capitalism is a way to organise nature (Moore 2015). Significantly, SIEMENS' notion of energy follows the internationally hegemonic one. This is the energy of petroculture. In petroculture's energy system, a natural asset (read: wild, indigenous population) is harnessed (read: colonised) in order to further material plenty and consumerist lifestyles for limited sectors of the global population. Whether the source is coal or oil, sun or wind, this notion of energy does not change.

Children of the wind: Aeolian aesthetics in Saharawi poetry

Graeme Macdonald argues that '[p]etroleum culture is enacted wherever there is a detectable reliance (conscious or otherwise) on fossil energy…' (2017, 291). Since all modern cultural production emerges from an age of global petroculture, argues Macdonald, one can read oil into all world literature (2012). If this is the case, could Saharawis be an exception? I do not mean that Saharawis live outside of petroculture. Even those staying in the remote camps of Algeria are connected to the rest of the world by mobile phones, can hitch a lift in a Polisario Land Rover, drink water from plastic bottles. Their exiled lives are furnished with petrocommodities, even if the material wealth and consumerism of petroculture is impossible for them. Besides, Saharawis' very exile and occupation is sustained by petrocultural energy systems. Nevertheless, lives before petroculture descended on Western Sahara are still in living memory: at least until the sixties, Spanish colonialists avoided interference with the 'hostile' Saharawi tribes, and largely stuck to the lucrative opportunities of Western Sahara's coastline. Furthermore, the Saharawi state-in-exile today attempts to conserve 'traditional' culture by fostering the breeding of camels in the camps, and clearing mines in 'liberated' Western Sahara to allow for nomadic camel pastoralism there. Several middle-aged and older Saharawis knew nothing but the desert nomad's life until the Moroccan invasion. It is the memory of this life, and this life that is still practised on the margins of petroculture in the 'liberated' territories, that shapes the Saharawi poetry analysed in this paper. With this life in mind, Spanish colonialists, observing how the nomads tracked clouds in their pursuit of water, famously nicknamed the Saharawis 'the children of the clouds.' As I discuss below, the wind, the sounds it transmits, the

water it carries as cargo, the trails it leaves in the sand, and the geological formations it creates, have been central to the possibility of Saharawis' nomadic life for millennia. Saharawi culture is windblown, and yet their territory is fast becoming a capitalist, imperial wind energy factory. Just as petrocultural societies are dominated by oil aesthetics, and the cultural production of Caribbean societies, which are built around imperial sugar plantations, is marked by saccharine stylistic tendencies (Niblett 2015), Saharawi cultural production is characterised by an aeolian aesthetic.

Wind is elusive to the eye. We can see the wind only in the movements of the things it carries, or in the visible traces of the material it has sculpted, destroyed, created or left behind. Visual aeolian aesthetics therefore rely on images of the windblown. In Boisha and Mohammed Salem's poetry, such imagery is drawn from aeolian geomorphology, that is, desertscapes created by the wind. Saharawi culture is constituted by these desertscapes, both those that are perceived as 'Saharawi,' and – since all identities are delineated by what is other to them - those that are not.

Boisha evokes the windblown Algerian Hamada to comment on the Saharawis' victimization. 'Existiría la Hamada si no nos hubieran intentado enterrar en ella? / ¿Existiría si no nos hubieran dicho que existía?'[10] asks Boisha in his poem *Di que no me lo has contado*. His question highlights that places are not neutral entities, but

[10]The poem was first published in Boisha's second sole-authored collection of poetry *Ritos de jaima*, Madrid: Editorial Bubisher, 2012. Available online: https://elpais.com/elpais/2012/10/22/africa_no_es_un_pais/1350907260_135090.html

socially, politically and culturally constructed ones, and simultaneously reveals how the Algerian Hamada, as a place, is imagined in Saharawi society: an infertile, bleak and insufferably hot plain. But to say that places are socially constructed does not mean that they are materially inexistent.[11] Hamada is a term for a particular type of desert landscape, characterized by rocky plains where almost all sand has been removed by an aeolian process known as deflation. Geologically, the Algerian Hamada would not exist without a huge and sustained wind power. The intense, turbulent – that is, characterized by chaotic changes in pressure and speed - action of the wind carries the sand away. Just a stony plateau of gravel and bare rock is left. Vegetal life is almost completely absent, and thus nomadic camel pastoralism, the basis of Saharawis' entire cultural identity, is not possible. For the Saharawi imagined nation, the Hamada is – materially as well as aesthetically – apocalyptic. The first line of *Di que no me lo has contado* nods to the international politics that have shaped this negative imagination of the Hamada. Saharawis have been 'enterra[do]' there, that is to say trapped, their nationalist aspirations thwarted, and denied dignified lives as individuals, by an undetermined third person (this could be the Moroccan state alone or in partnership with SIEMENS and other corporates, Spain and/or the wider international community). The ecological and visual hostility that the Hamada represents for Saharawis is reflected in the tone of Boisha's poem. The imperative 'Di' of its title, and the seemingly relentless, vertically stacked

[11] As Yi-Fu Tuan argues, human senses of place are not only imagined and the result of symbolic projection, but also formed by long sensory associations with the environment. Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective,' In: Gale S., Olsson G. (eds) *Philosophy in Geography. Theory and Decision Library*, Vol. 20, Springer, Dordrecht, 387-427.

rhetorical questions, suggest the angry tirade of a wronged person against a culprit. The powerful, destructive potential of a scowling and scouring wind capable of creating a geological Hamada is reflected in the violence of the final line, with its arresting images of 'carne,' 'muerte' and 'sangre nuestra.' The latter possessive pronoun indicates Saharawi victimhood.

Yet in this poetic picture of the wind-created, or wind-destroyed, Hamada, Boisha manages to introduce a simultaneous but strikingly different symbolic role for wind. '¿Existiría el Sáhara sin la envidia de la memoria del viento, sin las señales del fuego, la libertad de los pastos, la sombra de las acacias?' Here blows the wind of the *bādīa*. *Bādīa* is the Hassania (Saharawi language) term for the beloved desert heartlands of Western Sahara. With its juxtaposition next to the 'señales del fuego,' wind here symbolises, on the one hand, resistance. On the other, wind is freedom. This is evident metaphorically through Boisha's evocation of Western Sahara's *bādīa* landscape, and crudely through the reference to the way-of-life of the nomadic 'pastos:' they knew no walls, roamed freely. Saharawis today talk of the *bādīa*'s flowering and green havens after rains, and lovingly recall its *āḫīām* (traditional Saharawi tents), its camels, its acacias and breezes. As ethnobotanist and anthropologist Gabriele Volpato explains, in Saharawi society, 'feelings of good health, pride, dignity and freedom are associated with a 'return to the *badiya*' (2014a). The *bādīa* is all that the Hamada is not. But it, too, exists as a product of wind power. While the aeolian process of deflation has created the rocky plains of the Hamada, abrasion, the process through which wind-driven and windborne sand particles erode the earth's surface, has sculpted the rock formations that

characterise the *bādīa* landscape. These rocky wind creations, called *gallaba*, or *galb* in the singular, make the very way-of-life of Saharawis possible. In his poem named after these formations, Boisha explains the sociocultural significance of *gallaba*.

The poem, in which Western Sahara is personified as a longed-for and desired woman, relies on the double meaning of *galb*. One meaning for *galb* is heart. It is also the Hassania word for a particular type of desert landmark. According to traditional Hassania epic poetry, which had (and has) a pedagogical use for transmitting ethnobotanical and geographic knowledge between the generations,[12] there are 365 *gallaba* in Western Sahara, each with its own name.[13] British and Spanish readers might have various words, shaped by European historical cultural understandings and ecological knowledge, to classify the physical manifestations that are *gallaba*, for example mountains, caves or rock formations. But for Saharawis, *gallaba* are the markers - physically resembling hearts - forged by the desert wind to enable their nomadic culture. Saharawi nomadic life is driven by the need to know where to find water and the best forage for their milk-providing, life-sustaining camels (Volpato 2014a). As Volpato has highlighted, Saharawis have developed strategies of temporal and spatial mobility to ensure their ability to locate the best pasture areas at any given time (2014b: 206). The wind-forged *gallaba* have made these mobility strategies possible. They are vital for the nomads' navigation

[12] On 'traditional' Saharawi poetry, see Bahia Mahmud Awah, "Literatura oral y transmisión en el Sáhara," *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* 13 (2010).

[13] Limam Boisha, Personal Interview, Madrid, 6 July 2018.

through the desert, as well as providing shelter from the sun and wind when these energies are at their most powerful.

Boisha's use of aeolian geomorphology as a source of structural inspiration and imagery serves to claim Western Sahara for Saharawis due to their knowledge and membership of the desert ecology. In authoring *Galb*, Boisha takes the place of the wind in sculpting out stanzas that, like *gallaba*, guide us through Western Sahara. Mirroring the physical diversity of *gallaba*, each stanza has its own formal particularities: some are four lines long, some five; there is no regular rhyme scheme. But each stanza is similar in line length and content. All begin with a toponym, which is likened to an enticing part of a lover's body, and each ends with a lyrical flourish that employs imagery of lightness, flight or water, suggesting freedom and fertility. Each stanza, each *galb*, allows us to navigate through the poem, as if the entity of the poem was itself a metaphor for nomadic Saharawis' Western Sahara. The poem's formal features - short lines, the structuring of the poem into stanzas, and the abundant use of commas and full stops - paces the poem and ensures it progresses without unnecessary haste, as if to give the reader/listener time to fully pay attention to the desert surroundings. Thus, we are encouraged to mimic, or at least reflect on, a nomad's close relationship with all the desert elements. Boisha is nodding at Saharawis' intimate and complex knowledge of the botany, ecology and meteorology of the *bādīa*, and of well locations, distances and trajectories for crossing the desert (Volpato 2014a, b). Knowledge of place gives Saharawis the right to the *bādīa*, Boisha's poem suggests.

But Boisha also claims Western Sahara for his people on the basis of love. He does so by using aeolian aesthetics to evoke regions with special cultural meaning in the Saharawi communal imaginary. As we work vertically down the poem, each stanza/*galb* leads us gradually southwards, as if following the Saharawi nomads – guided by the *gallaba* - on a migration to Tiris. Tiris is considered the most beautiful region of Western Sahara's *bādīa*. It is located near the Mauritanian border. The final stanza, or southern-most *galb*, is dedicated to Tiris. This final stanza begins: 'Como Tiris es el ombligo del/Sahara,'. Leaving 'Sahara' to stand alone gives the separateness, the exile from this wonderful place, an added weight and aura. The very mention of Tiris, the most cherished part of the Western Sahara *bādīa* heartlands, will produce an emotional response in a Saharawi audience. It is fitting, then, that Boisha ends with an image of a steadfast heart: 'Galb es un corazón/corazón de piedra.' The repetition of 'corazón,' separated by a line break and comma, makes sure that the poem sits down and lingers on the imagery of a heart/*galb*. One is left, at the close of the poem, with all the poignant emotion of longing for, and missing, someone or somewhere. Yet the final line is also ambiguous. The simile suggests both the permanence and intransience of Saharawis' love for their homeland, and the cold lack of empathy of international corporates that gaze on the Saharawi refugees indifferently while plundering their country.

Of course, Boisha's employment of the ready-made heart metaphor also serves a nation-building function: the poem performs a patriotic 'love of homeland.' The single 'esculpida' of the penultimate stanza is perhaps the romantic peak of this loving sentiment. It takes time to carve a lover's name in stone. And such

petroglyphs can endure for thousands of years. This stanza evokes the poetic voice's desire to declare his eternal love by giving a physical and permanent shape to an intangible emotion. Elsewhere, the *gallaba* give way to alluring imagery of a woman's chest, belly and eyelashes, whilst the night is alive with beings ' - frontando su piel - .' The use of a pair of em dashes around this phrase disrupts the stanza and thereby draws special attention to the parenthetical content. The playful eroticism entices the reader, undoing the supposed 'blandness' of colonial-imagined deserts, although the ambiguity of the phrase – we do not know if the beings are rubbing their own, or a partner's, skin – possibly suggests masturbation, once again nodding to the loneliness of exile.

Boisha's personification of Western Sahara as a woman reinforces several of the poet's aforementioned claims to the territory, as well as his challenges to the discursive colonisation of desert and wind. A cursory look at the literature on gender and nationalism shows the process of gendering the Western Saharan nation is nothing new (Yuval-Davis 1997). However, the context of this poem, set against colonial *terra nullius* narratives that depict Western Sahara as an oversized, useless sandpit, gives a new meaning to a love poem where one's country is the sweetheart. The very idea of *terra nullius* is gendered: it implies a virgin territory waiting to be taken or impregnated, or rather developed and civilised, by colonial powers (McClintock 1995). But this woman, this desert, is no virgin: the Saharawi poetic voice is already her lover. He knows and adores every part of her body, every corner of the Sahara, intimately. Miyek, for example, is compared to 'un lunar/en el vientre de la tierra.' To know every mole on the body of a lover is surely the superlative of

intimate love. Furthermore, as is evident in the initial 'Un viajero me pregunta,' the Saharawi poetic voice is explaining his relationship with his loved one, with Western Sahara, to an external interlocutor, perhaps even a would-be coloniser. He must therefore break down the negative stereotypes of desert that exist in the Western imaginary. Boisha does so by marking the various windblown land(marks) of Western Sahara - Miyek, Ziza, Tiris - and making them active and dynamic. The stone of the desert is transient. Craters emerge. The dunes touch. The physical, inanimate characteristics of the desert become self-moving, active subjects. By personifying the desert, Boisha firstly makes the Western reader see the life and characters of the *bādīa*, which are normally invisible for such audiences. As discussed, this is due to the Western imaginary's understanding of 'desert' – on which SIEMENS' justifying discourses rely - as a desolate, uninhabited and bleak place (or non-place), or 'something left to waste' to translate the Latin *desertum*. Secondly, by giving agency to the desert's non-living elements, Boisha simply and effectively hints at wider Saharawi epistemologies and cosmologies, which necessarily (in order for the continuation of Saharawi nomadism) respect other animals, organisms, elements and minerals. He thereby highlights how the desert ecology works: humans, other beings and elements of the desert atmosphere, such as wind and sand, live in a mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationship. The implicit alternative is the maintenance of the human-nature binary, the linked devaluation of nature, and today's resultant planetary crisis. Furthermore, using the windblown *gallaba* as the gravitational centre of the poem serves to ridicule the corporate understanding of desert wind as that which is useless and burdensome until it is harnessed by manmade technology.

In her poem *La ciudad del viento* Fatma Galia Mohammed Salem likewise emphasizes, for a presumed Western audience (I make this presumption due to the poet's large serving of metaphors and similes from the European fairytale genre, for example 'El desierto me hace sentir/como una princesa,' or 'El sol/mi hada madrina'), the interconnectivity and mutual reliance that exists between beings and things of the desert.[14] She, like Boisha, puts a question mark beside the anthropocentric ontology of petrocultural modernity. Mohammed Salem does this by making the desert not a passive, intransient thing but rather a living subject that actively looks out for and elevates the emotional wellbeing of the poetic voice. Throughout the poem, the poetic voice is the object of transitive verbs for which desert elements serve as the subject: the stars watch over her, the moon spoils her, the sun guides and protects her, the desert makes her feel like a princess. The wind, on the other hand, is not the subject of a transitive verb but is rather her partner. It speaks with her, joining its voice with hers, in solidarity. Wind is her comrade-in-arms. By making wind her (activist) equal, Mohammed Salem points to its role in the aforementioned desert ecology suggested at by Boisha. The picture she paints of a harmonious relationship between Saharawis, wind and all the other desert elements serves to underline SIEMENS' contrasting alienation from the delicate desert ecology. She hints at a very different understanding and vocabulary of wind by opposing the idea that wind should be 'dominated' or 'tamed' at all. Drawing, as we

[14] Poem first published in Fatma Galia Mohammed Salem, *Nada es eterno*, Bilbao: Lankopi, 2010. Available online at http://literaturasaharaui.blogspot.com/2010/04/poemas-saharauis-para-crecer-nada-es.html

have seen, on the hegemonic colonial and capitalist understanding of energy, and indeed on *terra nullius* doctrine, SIEMENS depicts desert wind as underutilized: wind is the howling voice of the barbaric until corporate renewable developers tame it for electricity. Mohammed Salem undermines the colonial depiction of 'unharnessed' wind by making apparent the latter's creative, productive role and power in the desert ecology, and thus in the lives and culture of Saharawi nomads. Wind, shows the poet, is an integral part of Saharawis' Western Sahara. If, as the UN suggests, the fate of Western Sahara should be decided by Saharawis,[15] and, as several court cases and a UN Legal Opinion suggest, the phosphates, fish, agricultural produce and oil of Western Sahara can only be sold with the Saharawis' consent (Corell 2002, Western Sahara Resource Watch 2018a, b), then Mohammed Salem's foregrounding of the wind as her partner and equal suggest the same is true for renewable energy.

Aeolian aesthetics are at work beyond just imagery and metaphor in Mohammed Salem's poem. She mimics the repetitive, cyclical whirlpools of wind in the structure and rhetorical strategies of the poem. Repetition is arguably the heftiest device in Mohammed Salem's poetic toolbox. She uses it to create stability, continuity and a sense of control in knowing what is to come, thereby rupturing the disorientated,

[15] Literally hundreds of UN Security Council resolutions demand a free and fair self-determination referendum for the Saharawi people, and UN General Assembly resolutions denounce the "continued occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco." See for example United Nations General Assembly, 1980, *Resolution 35/19: The Question of Western Sahara (11 November 1980)*, [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/a_res_35_19.pdf], A/RES/35/19.

helpless, unpredictable and chaotic trauma of war, occupation and exile. The repetition of the longed-for 'ciudad del viento' and 'desierto,' from which Saharawi refugees are exiled, invokes those places, making them poetically present. And the repetition of entire, and various, phrases – as if they were circulating in the wind - gives a chant-like quality to the aural poem, increasing its spiritual energy and power to affect the listener. One should bear in mind the Saharawi oral cultural legacy here. As nomads, Saharawis relied on (oral) poets as transmitters of culturally-specific knowledge (history, topography, medicine and so on) between the generations, as anthropologist and fellow Saharawi poet Bahia Awah explores in some detail (2010). We can reasonably assume that Mohammed Salem's work was meant to be heard as well as read, hence the importance of paying attention to the aurality of aeolian aesthetics.

The aural power of the poem is further heightened by Mohammed Salem's use of devices such as alliteration and assonance (the stanza on the moon is a fitting example: 'la luna, mi espejo mágico,/ que me escucha,/ me mira y me mima'). I would argue that these are not just for (aeolian) aesthetic effect but also for reflecting the particular way that kinetic and sound energy work in the desert. There are relatively less obstacles to absorb the vibrations that produce sound waves in Western Sahara, thus sound travels much further, and is more perceptible, than elsewhere on earth.[16] Some days in the *bādīa*, depending on the wind's direction and strength, one might be able to hear, for example, the rustle of marching ants on

[16] Federico Guzmán, Personal Interview, Skype, 23 July 2018.

tree bark, or the pitter-patter and hum of 'singing' sand, blown and falling back on itself. Indeed, I would argue that Mohammed Salem's meticulous attention to the aural quality of her work serves to remind us firstly, of Saharawis' aforementioned intimate knowledge of desert ecology, and secondly, of the essential role of wind for Saharawis' survival. For nomads, the windborne sounds are an aural guide - sentinels - to the life of the desertscape, and can warn of nearing dangers from several miles away.[17] Nods to wind's enabling role in Saharawi nomadism challenges SIEMENS' claim to 'Ingenuity' in harnessing an otherwise 'useless,' 'barbaric' wind of a desert rendered *nullius*.

As mentioned above, we cannot see the wind, but only what is windblown and windborne. Aeolian aesthetics therefore appeal not just to vision, but to all the senses through which we know the wind. We have discussed the rich aural texture of Mohammed Salem's work. Other than hearing its sighs, trickles, whistles and roars, the key way we know the wind is through its touch (Ingold 2007). In Mohammed Salem's case, her preferred tool for appealing to the tactile is synaesthesia. In her stanza dedicated to sand, for example, she conjures the feel of its luxurious touch, as well as its rich sight: 'Ando descalza sobre una alfombra de arena,/suave como la seda/y dorada como el oro'. She thereby communicates, to a foreign audience that is

[17] This is also the case for the indigenous people of the Namib desert. See BBC World Service, *The Sounds of the Namib Desert*, podcast audio, The Compass2018, https://player.fm/series/the-compass-1301444/the-sounds-of-the-namib-desert

presumably ignorant of the desert's delights,[18] the beauty and wonder of Western Sahara. Much like Boisha's own evocation of touch then, Mohammed Salem seeks to challenge colonial mind-sets that imagine the desert as bland and barren.

Again in the fashion of Boisha, Mohammed Salem conjures a particular windblown desertscape in order to persuade her audience of Saharawis' vast knowledge of, and place in, the desert ecology. With its golden and silky carpets of sand and sea-like veils, Mohammed Salem's *La ciudad del viento* evokes an erg. An erg, or sand sea, is a large area of aeolian, that is windblown, sand. The dunes of an erg are active, moving, migratory. Ripples on their surface reveal the wind's direction and speed. The profile of dunes, whether they are curved into croissants, shaped like stars, or linear in form, tell us of the surrounding wind regime: its strength, pattern, direction. Aeolian dunes are constituted by the wind, but they are also a mirror to it. They are weathervanes.[19] As discussed above, nomads' ability to read the direction of the wind makes is possible for them to use sound and scent as lookouts: they can tell what is coming, from where.

[18] Mohammed Salem nods to this ignorance through the repeated lines "veo lo que nadie ve,/siento lo que nadie siente" as if to recognise that her Western audience is unable to appreciate the desert attributes that she sees and feels so clearly.

[19] For more on reading weather patterns in dunes and ripples, see Lori Fenton, 'Sand Waves in the Desert. Or Pet Peeves and Deciphering Climate Change in the Solar System,' Planetary Society, 21 February 2014, http://www.planetary.org/blogs/guest-blogs/2014/0219-sand-waves-in-the-desert.html.

The only erg or sand sea in Western Sahara sits in the country's heel, within the wider beloved Tiris region. The erg, known by the name of its elevated *galb* Azefal, runs from north east Mauritania, through south west Western Sahara, and back into Mauritania again. Here is Mohammed Salem's oxymoronic city of wind. She gives the famed Saharawi erg the label of 'city' to show her lack of want for colonial-imposed urbanism, modernism and so-called development. The rural city of wind offers all she could need. Likewise, the poetic voice uses all the senses to show us the desert is as valuable as 'seda,' 'oro' or 'diamantes' to Saharawis. Her palace is her animal-skin tent, and the desert, not SIEMENS' contribution to so-called economic development, provides all the riches she desires. As the author told me in an interview, ""We don't need big companies. All nomads need are oases, water, vegetation and the natural wind."[20]

Mohammed Salem's rejection of economic development and urbanisation – made clear in her celebration of a simple, nomadic desert life free of material wealth - can be read as a wider refutation, or poetic silencing, of petroculture. To draw on Dorothy Odartey-Wellington's work on the near absence of the Moroccan military wall from Saharawi poetry, a *purposeful lack* can be read as resistance. Odartey-Wellington argues that the Saharawi 'writers' imaginations make for' the Saharawi heartlands, and indeed its beaches, 'without any reference to the wall between the poetic voice and the ocean' (2017: 5). Odartey Wellington suggests this is because the writers 'are engaged in a poetic negation, or undoing, of the power of the wall'

(2017: 5). The poets thereby subtly remind us that the walls of occupied Western Sahara, both the military ones and the fences surrounding the King's and SIEMENS' vast wind farms, are not, after all, the 'benevolent enclosures' that the *terra nullius* narrative promised. Likewise, the purposeful lack of petrocommodities and the 'neoliberal freedoms' of petroculture in Boisha and Mohammed Salem's work, as well as their reliance on aeolian, rather than oil, aesthetics, constitute a (temporary) barrier to the pernicious reach of petroculture.

Conclusion

The incorporation of aeolian aesthetics into Saharawi poetry, shows a way to challenge the colonial wind energy developments in occupied Western Sahara on an artistic level. Boisha and Mohammed Salem create melancholic pieces that long for a return to a pre-petrocultural, nomadic way-of-life. Saharawi culture is entangled with the wind, and the 'homeland' that Saharawis love is materially shaped by it. Emerging from this culture are what I call *aeolian aesthetics*: poetry and visual art informed by wind in their structures, motifs, imagery and rhetorical devices. Aeolian aesthetics are characterised by a decided appeal to the senses through which we know the wind: sound and touch, and visions of the windblown. On a political level, they undermine hegemonic understandings of energy, which make 'nature' (in this case, wind) something to be 'harnessed' and 'dominated,' in order to power capitalism and colonialism. The poets do so, first, by showing wind's role as a creative force, both in the artistic sense and also in a geological sense: The three

desertscapes invoked in the poetic texts explored here - the resented plains of the Algerian Hamada, the cartographic possibilities of the *bādīa*'s *gallaba*, and the dunes of the erg surrounding *galb* Azefal – are products of ongoing aeolian processes. Second, the poets show the wind's productive power by nodding to how it has historically shaped, and continues to enable, the Saharawi's nomadic existence. Thirdly, they claim the desert's winds as an integral part of Western Sahara, and therefore as a subject of Saharawi sovereignty, for purposes of wind's exploitation as energy. Aeolian aesthetics then, in the particular case of Western Sahara, are employed in an anti-colonial movement at the poetic level. Yet the ability, demonstrated by Boisha and Mohammed Salem, of aeolian aesthetics to undermine the logics of petroculture itself indicates their wider possibilities for those living in petroculture and wishing to resist it. In response to the current environmental crisis, Szeman and Boyer argue that the task of the energy humanities is to 'grasp the full intricacies of our imbrication with energy systems (with fossil fuels in particular), and second, map out other ways of being, behaving and belonging in relation to both old and new forms of energy' (2017b: 3). Aeolian aesthetics allow us to envisage a social existence - forged around a renewable energy source - that refuses the colonial, capitalist clothes handed down from petroculture. They subvert petroculture by challenging our cultural entanglement with oil, inviting us to aspire to a very different energy system, and assisting us in imagining how being, behaving and belonging to decolonial wind culture might feel.

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